

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 26<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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### **HINCHEY URGES STATE TO MOVE AGGRESSIVELY ON I-86**

OWEGO - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today urged representatives of the New York State Department of Transportation to speed up the timetable for the designation of Interstate Route 86. Hinchey, who introduced the legislation in Congress that gave interstate status to Route 17, has for several years been pushing the state to move more aggressively in making the improvements necessary to bring the highway up to interstate standards.

"The complete designation of interstate status on the highway is a matter of economic urgency", said Hinchey. "While I am pleased that DOT has responded to the sense of urgency we've been trying to convey, their plan still needs improvement. I regard this as the most important economic development project in the region and one of the most important economic development projects in the state."

Hinchey today attended a joint meeting of the Regional Transportation Working Group and the I-86 Statewide Coalition. Representatives from the Department of Transportation also participated in the meeting and indicated that the timetable for construction has been moved up.

In 1997 Hinchey introduced the legislation that was incorporated into the Building Efficient Surface Transportation Equity Act (BESTEA) and gave Route 17 the interstate designation pending certain improvements to be performed by New York State. At Hinchey's request, BESTEA also provided over \$17 million specifically for these improvements. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century provided \$8 billion to New York for major highway projects.

In 1999, however, DOT claimed the state did not have the funds to complete work on I-86 until 2012. Hinchey spearheaded the effort to urge the state to instead make I-86 a top priority in its five-year transportation plan. Subsequently, state leaders agreed on a plan that would achieve the full interstate designation in five to seven years. This year Governor Pataki committed to providing funds for the improvements in the state budget.

Hinchey also pledged to work for more funding for I-86 in 2003 when Congress reauthorizes the major transportation legislation that governs such projects.

A summary of Hinchey's involvement with I-86 is attached.

## **HINCHEY WORKS TO CONVERT ROUTE 17 TO I-86**

**June 1997-** Hinchey introduces a bill to designate Route 17 as Interstate Route 86.

**April 1998-** House passes the Building Efficient Surface Transportation Equity Act (BESTEA), which incorporates language from Hinchey's bill designating Route 17 as Interstate 86. At Hinchey's request, BESTEA also provides \$16.8 million for improvements between Windsor and Kirkwood and \$6 million for the Parksville interchange in Sullivan County.

**June 1998-** President Clinton signs BESTEA into law; funding for Broome and Sullivan County projects has been scaled back to \$17 million.

**February 1999-** After the NYS DOT takes steps to designate only portions west of Corning as I-86, Hinchey, along with Sens. Moynihan and Schumer and Rep. Houghton, meets with DOT officials to urge that they speed up the timetable for designating the rest of the highway.

**July 1999-** Citing lack of funds, NYS DOT estimates that upgrades to interstate standards may not be completed before 2012.

**August 1999-** Hinchey publicly criticizes New York State for sitting on federal funds and moving too slowly on I-86.

**February 2000-** With the April 1 deadline for the 5-year plan approaching, Hinchey works with Chambers of Commerce and the I-86 Coalition to spearhead effort to put public pressure on the Pataki Administration to make I-86 one of the plan's top priorities. Along with Sens. Moynihan and Schumer and Reps. Houghton, Gilman and Quinn, Hinchey writes to Gov. Pataki, urging that the DOT's 5-year capital plan include \$550 million for improvements to the eastern 204-mile portion of Route 17 that will bring it up to interstate standards. Hinchey argues that the federal legislation provided more than enough funding for this purpose. The letter points out that the state received \$8 billion in federal highway assistance through TEA-21 between fiscal years 1998 and 2003. In addition, a provision of TEA-21 directs surplus federal gas tax revenues to federal-aid highway programs.

Hinchey places opinion pieces in local papers and holds public meetings in Sullivan and Broome counties. He repeatedly makes the point that the state already has ample funds with which to make the improvements and that every wasted day costs the Southern Tier money, jobs and residents.

**May 2000-** Hinchey learns that the state has come to a final agreement on a 5-year plan that includes the completion of I-86 in five to seven years. Hinchey applauds the faster timetable, but criticizes the state for borrowing money through the proposed Transportation Bond Act when the funds have already been provided by the federal government.

**November 2000-** Transportation Bond Act is defeated by voters.

**January 2001-** Published reports indicate that Pataki will include funding for I-86 in his budget, keeping it on the 5-7 year timetable.

**April 2001-** DOT confirms that Pataki is committing the funds to begin work in 2005.

**August 2001-** Hinchey attends joint meeting of Regional Transportation Working Group and the I-86 Statewide Coalition, again urging DOT to move more aggressively to complete work on I-86.